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**USDA – CSREES National Water Quality Program:
Applying Knowledge to Improve Water Quality**

By

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The USDA-CSREES National Water Quality Program began in 1990 as a response to needs expressed in the 1987 Clean Water Act amendments related to Nonpoint Source Pollution. The program was redesigned in response to congressional direction in 1998 and emerged in its present form in 2000. Key elements of the program are linking resources of Land Grant universities in a regional structure of integration, research, education and Extension/outreach, and leveraging resources through partnerships in support of the national program goals. This program directly addresses three of the presentation topics at the 2004 UCWR/NIWR Conference:

- Innovations and successes in water education
- Science as a referee between economics and the environment
- Minimizing adverse impacts of drought.

This poster presentation will explain this program in detail. A summary of the program follows.

The CSREES Integrated Water Quality Grants Program (AREERA Section 406) enabled the formation and linkage of 10 Regional Water Quality Coordination Projects that serve as the foundation of a National Water Quality Program.

Program Goals

- Link state and regional projects and their network of research, extension and education professionals.
- Facilitate information and resource exchange regionally and nationally.
- Establish effective communication linkages both internally and externally.
- Develop and strengthen important partnerships.

Framework and Organization

1) The Committee for Shared Leadership is an internal working group created to foster development of the National Water Quality Program. Members include:

Regional Project Representatives (10)

1890 & 1994 Institution Representatives (2)

CSREES National Program Leaders (2)

2) Regional Water Quality Coordination meetings and conferences are facilitating resource sharing and technology transfer. Integrated water resource management

information and technology are being delivered to clientele at state and regional levels. Interagency Liaisons in each region are enhancing multi-agency coordination and promoting partnerships. Special projects are targeting critical water resource issues within and across state boundaries.

3) Annual National Water Quality Conferences are enabling strategic planning and national program coordination organized around 8 key water quality themes:

- Animal Waste Management
- Drinking Water and Human Health
- Environmental Restoration
- Nutrient and Pesticide Management
- Pollution Assessment and Prevention
- Watershed Management
- Water Conservation and Ag Water Management
- Water Policy & Economics

4) A National Website (<http://www.usawaterquality.org/>) provides:

- Direct links to each of the 10 regional water quality information databases.
- Access to local and regional programs, publications and resource management tools.
- Links to partner agencies and organizations involved in water resource management at both state and federal levels.
- An on-line National Water Quality Coordinator contact list providing linkages to state contacts across the country.
- National and regional publications with contact information and regional summaries by water quality theme.

5) AREERA Section 406 established a competitive grants process and is composed of four major funding categories:

- Regional Coordination Projects
- Extension Education Projects
- Integrated Projects (Research/Extension/Education)
- National Facilitation Projects

Regional Coordination Projects utilize State Water Quality Coordinators to promote regional collaboration, enhance delivery of successful programs and encourage multi-state and multi-region efforts to protect and restore water resources in 10 regions consistent with the EPA regional structure.

Extension Education Projects provide outreach programs into target watersheds. Since 2000, 20 Extension Education projects have been implemented. Example programs include:

- Preservation of Rural Watersheds and Drinking Water Resources
- Training Environmental Stewards: Integrated Water Quality & Quantity Education from Mountain to Ocean

- Accelerating Riparian Buffer Adoption to Enhance Water Quality and Farm Income
- Oklahoma Green County Watershed Education Project

Integrated Projects implement a focused research effort along with outreach education to address a watershed concern. 37 integrated projects have been funded, including:

- An Integrated Approach to Nonpoint Source Pollution and TMDLs in a Geographically Diverse Watershed
- Cattle Production Practices in Grazed Watersheds of the Humid Region

National Facilitation Projects coordinate comprehensive efforts relevant across the United States. Four National Facilitation Projects have been implemented:

- Water Outreach Education
- Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring
- Pollution Prevention & Assessment
- Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials